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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 USOSCE 000200

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR VCI/CCA, EUR/PRA, EUR/RPM, SCA/CEN  
JCS FOR COL NORWOOD  
OSD FOR ISA (PERENYI)  
NSC - DEFENCE POLICY AND STRATEGY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OSCE](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: OPEN SKIES: JANUARY/JULY 2008--TRANSPARENCY AND  
COOPERATION, BUT NO DIGITAL CAMERAS AT SESSION'S END

REF: A. USOSCE 179

[1](#)B. STATE 6161

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: During its winter-spring session and under U.S. chairmanship, the Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC) commemorated the 500th observation flight since the Open Skies Treaty entered into force. This "good news" event garnered widespread press coverage which emphasized an arms control treaty that is working, bringing benefits including openness, transparency, and cooperation. While a collective accomplishment for the 34 states parties to the treaty, the commemoration also served to underline the positive role of the U.S. in European security.

[1](#)2. (SBU) An agreement to allow digital photography is still badly needed. To this end, working group meetings during the session included commercial aerial camera manufacturers. The working group Chair (also U.S.) issued a very technical "best guess" for an agreement in April. All countries agreed with his proposal except for Russia, which blocked consensus in May. Russian comments were received in July and are under study. The OSCC approved the extension of the mandate for this working group through 2008. During the January-July OSCC session, there also was a minor deal with Russia on refueling, a semi-reversal by an ally after U.S. demarches, and more. The next OSCC meeting will be on September 22. End summary.

U.S. Chairmanship and 500th flight Commemoration  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) On April 14, the United States began its five-month Chairmanship of the OSCC, following Germany's January-March chairmanship. The U.S. emphasized the need for states to complete work on the digital video sensor decision. The U.S. delegation also began organization of the commemoration of the 500th Open Skies observation flight under the Treaty, noting that the 500 number would probably be reached during the summer recess in August. As of July 10, the official flight tracker included notifications for 488 flights (OSCC.DEL/7/08/Rev 2); on August 1 it had reached 495 flights.

[1](#)4. (SBU) On July 14, the OSCC held a special plenary session to commemorate the conduct of 500 observation flights since the Treaty's entry into force in January 2002. Mission's

Public Diplomacy section encouraged press coverage and organized a media event, including the release of 500 balloons on the front steps of the Hofburg Palace in symbolic commemoration. The U.S. initiative received strong support from all delegations, including financial contributions from Italy, Sweden and Lithuania to defray some of the costs. U.S. leadership of the event was especially welcomed as a sign of commitment to European arms control and security. The historical significance of the Treaty on Open Skies was linked (by Finnish Ambassador, speaking on behalf of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office) under U.S. Chairmanship and former President Bush's proposal in May 1989, which initiated the successful talks that led to the Treaty.

¶5. (SBU) The 500 balloons provided a visual that garnered widespread positive press attention around the world for an arms control treaty that is working, bringing benefits including openness, transparency, and cooperation. While a collective accomplishment for the 34 states parties to the treaty, the commemoration and its widespread press coverage underlined the positive role of the U.S. in European security. We are not unaware of any negative coverage or comments. (More details ref A)

Sensor Working Group: No Deal on Digital Yet  
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¶6. (SBU) On January 21, the OSCC adopted a Decision extending the mandate for the Informal Working Group on Sensors (IWGS) into 2008 (OSCC.DEC/1/08). The U.S. Delegation continued to emphasize the priority for progress on digital sensor work,

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especially with regard to Revision One to Decision Number Fourteen (video). The IWGS chairman (U.S.) held a meeting from February 27-March 7 that included both traditional working group sessions and meeting with commercial aerial camera manufacturers.

¶7. (SBU) In April, the Chair issued a very technical "best guess" version of Decision 14 with the hope that it would be acceptable to all. He requested comments by May 1 (OSCC.SEN/4/08). In early-May, however, Russia said it was withholding consensus. It provided comments on this version in July. These comments were still under careful study when the winter-spring session ended.

Brits Reverse on Outbound Missions after U.S. Demarche  
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¶8. (SBU) In May, delegations learned that the UK would no longer be able to fund operation and repairs of the aging aircraft it had been using for Open Skies missions. It indicated it would only be able to continue to receive all passive quotas (i.e., inbound missions). Following a U.S. demarche, extensive informal consultations, and an offer from the U.S. to share an Open Skies flight on a U.S. aircraft, the UK revised its position such that it will continue flights with partners and/or leased aircraft in 2009. In July, the UK delegation made a clarification statement regarding its future intentions for participation under the Treaty. The UK emphasized it continued to value the Treaty, and remains committed toward its implementation.

Deal with Russia on Alternate Airfields for Refueling  
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¶9. (SBU) In May and June, Russia and the U.S. exchanged notes verbale reflecting a bilateral agreement reached during two previous bilateral consultations in August 2006 and 2007. The notes specify the procedures for use of alternate airfields for refueling stops prior to and during observation flights. The draft decision under discussion in the working group is compatible with these bilateral arrangements.

First time: Sharing Missions with Poland, Georgia

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¶10. (SBU) The U.S. has fostered the opportunity to partner with countries that can provide aircraft for some of the U.S. active quotas. This year, USDel negotiated arrangements for sharing such missions with Poland and Georgia (both for the first time), as well as Turkey. The OSCC Decision on Quota Distribution for 2008 was subsequently revised three times this session to reflect these new arrangements. The Decision also reflects the U.S. offer to bring representatives from the UK and Latvia of joint missions (OSCC.DEC/5/08). U.S. offers for sharing flights continue to build good will with Allies.

Rules and Procedures: Alternate Airfields

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¶11. (SBU) In April, Russian Chair (Kozlov) of the Informal Working Group on Rules and Procedures (IWGRP) introduced three papers (a food for thought and two draft decision) regarding procedures for alternate airfields. Working group discussion from May)July resulted in a consolidated text provided by Slovakia. Russia agreed this text could serve as the basis for future discussion (OSCC.RP/13/08).

¶12. (SBU) In July, the OSCC adopted a Decision (OSCC.DEC/4/08) that applies a scale of distribution of OSCC expenses that reflects the OSCE permanent council scale for 2008 and 2009.

Focus this Fall

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¶13. (SBU) USDel expects the fall OSCC round to focus on the  
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following issues:

-- Digital (and other) Sensors: The sensor working group IWGS will continue to discuss draft decisions, including recent Russian drafting suggestions;

-- Annual quota distribution: a special workshop will be held on October 9-10 to organize the active quota distribution, as well as to discuss initial deconfliction of those quotas over certain states. The U.S. quota bid for 2009 should be distributed by mid-September in preparation for this meeting. Germany is organizing the quota meeting per modalities paper (OSCC.INF/19/08);

-- Deconfliction of quotas by quarter will take place after the quota distribution decision is adopted at the end of October. First quarter 2009 should be done by November 15;

-- If all potential mission sharing arrangements for 2009 are not organized prior to October, delegation will support further bilateral consultations upon request;

-- Rules and Procedures: USDel expects discussion to continue on the Slovak drafting proposal of the original Russian text for an OSCC decision on alternate airfield procedures;

-- USDel will participate in drafting the standard paragraph OSCC contribution to the Ministerial Declaration, and will work with its troika partners, Germany and Belarus, to prepare the annual OSCC Chairman's Report to OSCE Ministers.

¶15. (SBU) Open Skies activities taking place elsewhere in Europe this fall include:

--Romania and POD Group joint aircraft/sensor certification event in Bucharest in mid-September;

--Germany is hosting another seminar on future Open Skies aircraft options in Berlin October 15-16.

¶16. (SBU) Although the U.S. is still chair of the OSCC, no further meetings are expected under U.S. chairmanship. The next OSCC meeting will be when the Fall 2008 session begins on September 22 under chairmanship of Belarus.  
SCOTT